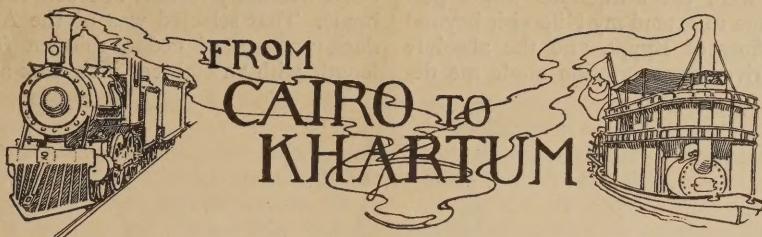


Century Jan. 1903

147

Egypt



BEING PRELIMINARY TO A RETURN JOURNEY  
IN AN ADIRONDACK CANOE

BY WILLIAM GAGE ERVING

WITH PICTURES BY FERNAND LUNGREN

FOR many years I had gazed in imagination longingly toward the Nile, that stream unique among the rivers of the world, the life of a country which even now, after centuries of oppression at the hands of foreign masters, contains nearly ten millions of people. For me it had ever exercised a powerful fascination. I longed to live by it, on it, with it, to be borne upon its waters, to rest upon its banks, to know for myself, if only in an insignificant degree, this stream before which man has stood and wondered for thousands of years.

In Egypt itself, however, one sees but a single phase of this mighty river, a broad, resistless flood sweeping majestically along the bed it has worn for itself in the course of ages. At Khartum, where unite the Blue Nile, with its summer floods laden with the rich and inexhaustible soil from Abyssinia's mountain slopes, and the White Nile, with its never-failing waters drawn from the Nyanzas, there is again the broad, majestic stream, but between these stretches all is vastly different.

Here for hundreds of miles the river rends its way through one opposing mountain ridge after another, its waters hemmed in by black crags and precipices, and obstructed by innumerable rocky barriers, over which it hurls itself with a sullen roar in many a foaming cataract. But this is only in the flood season, in late summer; during the winter the Nile, exchanging its brownish-yellow hue for one of green, becomes a lazy stream, almost hidden by

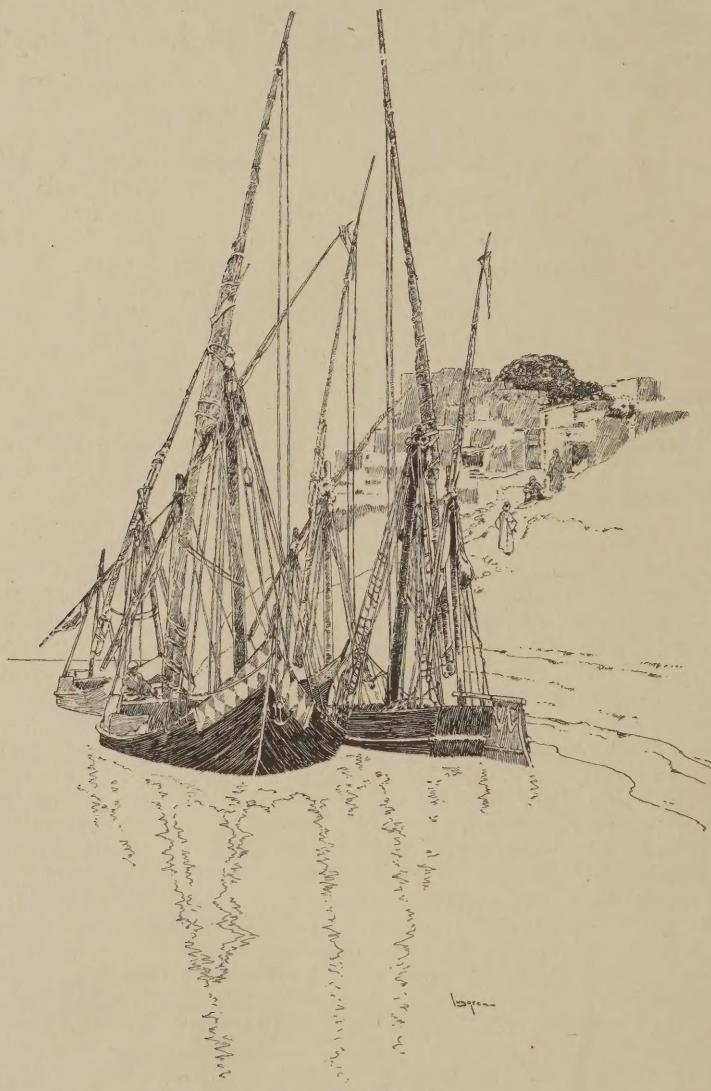
lofty banks,—of mud in Egypt, of rocks in the cataract country,—between which it winds its way among sandy shoals or rocky ridges. Then it is but a shadow of its former greatness, navigable only for boats of lightest draft, and even easily fordable at places.

However, to visit the lower portions of the Nile is no easy matter during the summer, since only slow-moving native sail-boats ply thereon at this time, while through the cataract country a journey by water is well-nigh impossible at any season. Here for a hundred miles at a stretch not a sail is to be seen. During the month of highest flood a stray native raft of timbers from the Sudan may attempt these dangerous reaches. In the recent military expeditions many a boat was dragged with hawsers up through the rapids by the sheer strength of hundreds of men; but nowadays rarely does an intruding native nuggar invade these solitary wastes.

Yet all the features of natural grandeur and interest which Father Nile presents are to be found in this same cataract country, and the monuments of antiquity, although comparatively few in number, are of extreme interest. Here, too, is to be met the native, his primitive traits not yet obliterated by contact with European civilization; and, above all, it is in this the Egyptian Sudan that one can observe, as perhaps in no other region, the admirable results which a few years of Great Britain's just and beneficent rule have brought about.

Such were the attractions which persuaded me to extend my Nile visit beyond the confines of Egypt, and the absolute lack of river transportation made me de-

came necessary to take one with me from home. That selected was of the Adirondack pattern, of cedar, thirteen feet in length, with an eighteen-inch deck at stem



Drawn by Fernand Lungren

A RIVER SCENE BETWEEN CAIRO AND ASSUAN

termine to furnish my own boat, which must be light enough to be easily carried, and yet of sufficient strength to resist rough usage. Nothing seemed to meet these requirements but an American canoe, and such boats being unknown in Egypt, it be-

and stern, and weighing fifty-seven pounds. Single-bladed paddles, a light tent, the poles fitted with boat-hooks, two heavy blankets, and a rubber-lined sack for clothing, camera, and other necessities, made up my equipment.

These were firmly lashed inside the canoe, which was then carefully sheathed in many layers of cotton-wadding and burlap and started upon its journey of over seven thousand miles by water and rail to Khartum.

So it came about that the early morning of the 12th of July found me on board one of the government steamers which ply between the First and Second Nile cataracts, just entering the territory of the Sudan. The river itself offers the only means of communication between Egypt and the Sudan on this so-called "Halfa reach," where has been established a service of steamers since pre-British days. Though neither beautiful nor picturesque, these boats answer the purpose for which they were built,—to carry troops and supplies to the Sudan,—and now throughout the year maintain a semi-weekly service over two hundred and twenty-five miles, running aground frequently at low Nile, in spite of their light draft of thirty inches, but planning to accomplish the up trip in from fifty to eighty hours, while at high Nile the return is made at express speed in from fifteen to twenty. No attempt has ever been made to construct a railway beside the river from the First to the Second Cataract and so make all-rail communication with Khartum. The mountainous nature of the country renders such an undertaking far too costly, and if the connection is ever made, it will probably be by means of a line running inland from Assuan to meet the Sudan Railway in the middle of the Nubian Desert.

On this trip the steamer was handicapped in her passage against the current by two double-decked barges, one on each side, loaded down with natives and freight. Her progress consequently often scarcely exceeded that of the clumsy native gyassas which we frequently encountered, forcing their way upstream, their huge triangular sails bellying before the stiff north breeze. Her pilots, however, were natives, who not only know the main channels in the shifting river, but are able to estimate the depth from the appearance of the water,—a very necessary accomplishment when sand-bars form in a single night,—and by 10 A.M., sixty-one hours from Shellal, they had brought the boat to Halfa, her destination.

Soon after, at the post headquarters, I

was enjoying the hospitality of a British officer, on his way up the river to Dongola, and was being made more than comfortable pending the departure of the Khartum express, scheduled for 9 P.M.

Halfa, or more properly Wady Halfa, though still a village of considerable size, bears few vestiges of its importance in the days of the dervish campaigns, when thousands of troops were quartered in the great camp to the south of the present town, and tons of supplies and munitions lay heaped up on the river-bank. Now it is a quiet, sleepy place, and the army of invasion has given way to a few companies of native troops whose duties are to police the town and guard the body of criminals which is segregated here. With the departure of the troops went also the officers, and now at the mess there were fewer than half a dozen, who govern the province and administer the railway, which has its northern terminus and its principal car-shops at this point.

The construction of this railway will always be ranked one of the greatest of Kitchener's achievements in the Sudan. Obliged by limited appropriations to conduct all his operations at the least possible expense, he made use of every remnant of the equipment of Ismaïl Pasha's unfinished railway, rescuing dismantled engines from ditches, and collecting missing parts from the contents of scrap-heaps. Near the Atbara his rails gave out, leaving a break of some distance to a necessary terminus. Every siding which could be spared was taken up, and then, the results being insufficient, the village of Wady Halfa was laid under requisition. Here many of the houses had straw roofs supported by rails taken from the old line. These were summarily appropriated, and after their removal Halfa presented the spectacle of a mushroom Western town after a cyclone. But the line was completed.

The greatest obstacle was the all-important stretch of two hundred and thirty miles from Halfa to Abu Hamed, across the neck of the great bend of the Nile, an unbroken expanse of barren desert. The leading engineers of Europe declared it impossible to construct a railway across this tract, arguing that the entire carrying capacity of a train would be taken up by the water-supply necessary for the locomotive. Nevertheless, assuming the responsibility, the Sirdar ordered the work begun,

relying on the indomitable pluck and skill of his subordinates in charge and his own habit of success. Near the middle of the course, at points some fifty miles apart, wells were sunk, an operation ridiculed by the natives, and with true Kitchener luck water was struck in both instances, so that the train now accomplishes the distance with only two extra water-tanks. But all succeeding attempts to find water along the line—and they have been many—have proved fruitless.

It was by means of this railway that the Sudan was conquered. By its construction the long route of nearly seven hundred miles by way of a river for long stretches absolutely unnavigable for ten or eleven months in the year, and even at flood impracticable save for small whale-boats hauled through rapids at enormous toil and expense, was exchanged for a short, direct, unobstructed highway, its carrying capacity limited only by the shortcomings of a single pair of rails.

A march of a couple of months along a rough river-bank, through a country absolutely unable to support a passing army, was exchanged for a train journey of as many days. The size and operations of an invading force were no longer limited by unavoidable commissariat deficiencies, and when the time arrived for the decisive blow, one short summer campaign accomplished a work which had been dragging on for years. The long years spent in the remodeling and training of a defeated army were all-important, and established for the Sirdar the reputation of being the greatest military organizer of the day; but it was the Sudan Railway which made the termination of the great work possible so suddenly, so surely, and at so small a sacrifice of life.

To-day the railway, extended to Khartum, five hundred and seventy-seven miles from Halfa, is being used in the development of the country; but still it is largely military in its value, and wholly so in its management. Every day a train leaves Halfa for the south, reaching its destination in two or three days, while twice a week only, in connection with the river steamers, the mail express goes through in thirty hours. No sane man would think of traveling by any other than the express, drawn by Baldwin locomotives, for, given the road-bed and track, they reach their destination somewhere nearly on time,

while the European locomotives may spend a day or two by the wayside undergoing repairs. Passengers rejoice in the "Americans," their drivers delight in the ease of cleaning and oiling them, they pull very much heavier loads than their European rivals, and the only complaint I heard was that for this extra efficiency they required more coal—a very important item in the Sudan—and more oil.

The express, as run in the summer, was a heterogeneous affair. On this occasion, besides the locomotive, tender, and water-tanks, there were three trucks loaded with coal, two others with natives, and two box-cars carrying the handful of first-class passengers and the mail. My night ride across the desert was not pleasant. Besides myself, there were in the car three other passengers,—Greeks and Syrians,—who brought cart-loads of baggage and merchandise of all sorts with them, in addition to their supplies, cooking-utensils, and beds, these last comprising one double four-poster and two native angarebs.

The Sudanese angareb consists simply of a low couch-frame with a woven fabric of palm rope stretched over the top, and through the kindness of my Halfa friends I was supplied with one for this trip. Thus the "first-class coach" was, in point of fact, a sleeper and a baggage-car combined. It was furnished with a galvanized-iron roof, under which for a space of three feet or more the sides were entirely open, and my blankets being still stowed away in my canoe, by morning I was thoroughly chilled by the night wind of the desert, and covered from head to foot with a thick layer of the finest sand.

The early morning on the desert was delightfully cool and fresh, but as the sun leaped up, all was changed. At intervals, as the train moved along, there would appear ahead a broad, marshy lake glistening in the sunlight, its surface partly hidden by clumps of reeds and marsh plants, which, as we approached, gradually receded and then in a flash was gone, leaving in its stead the endless desert, already beginning to scorch in the sunshine. The gray expanse, ridged and hollowed by the storms of the past, stretched unbroken away to the horizon, save where, like an island rising above the surrounding billows, rose a bold, rocky height of deepest blue. At one point, on the summit of a knoll beside

the line, silhouetted against the sky and as motionless and silent as the rocks and sand about them, appeared a party of mounted Arabs, regarding impassively this latest triumph of civilization over the desert. Save for these, no vestige of life appeared in that boundless abode of death.

At nine o'clock we again reached the Nile, and stopped at the straggling village of Abu Hamed, from which, half an hour later, in charge of a fresh Baldwin, we started on the second section of the railway, extending to Shendi, some two hundred and thirty-five miles beyond. The line followed the course of the river, and its palm-lined bank was often visible, while the stream itself appeared now and again, disclosing a mass of whirling waters broken by rocks and islands. Occasionally a wretched hut in ruins, and clearings in the thorn-bushes, together with numerous skeletons of horses and camels, indicated an old camp site, for three years ago the army of invasion crept slowly along this way, the head of the advancing railway close upon its heels.

Some twenty miles above Berber we crossed the Atbara by the new steel bridge built by an American firm. This, the only branch of the Nile below Khartum, is throughout the dry season only a succession of stagnant pools. Then come the rains, and in early July in a single night it thunders down in flood, whirling on its muddy waters trees and animals caught by its unexpected onrush.

Thirty miles up this stream, at an early morning hour in April, 1898, Kitchener unexpectedly fell upon the fortified camp of the Khalifa's lieutenant, Mahmud. The carnage was fearful, numbers were captured, and the pitiless desert took care of most of the fugitives. Mahmud's army of sixteen thousand men was no more, and he himself, a prisoner in chains, returned with the conqueror to Berber.

As the day wore on, the heat beneath that iron roof became almost intolerable, the thermometer registering 110° and the contents of the water-jugs growing luke-warm, while clouds of sand continually drove into the car, filling eyes, ears, and hair, and sifting through every article of clothing. So the long hours of that frightful day dragged on. Nothing varied the monotony save an occasional glimpse of a group of gazelles wildly staring at the train

and then suddenly scudding into the mimosa. Once, too, the brakes were jammed down, amid shrieks of the whistle, to avoid colliding with a camel, who lumbered off the track and stood regarding us with snarls of defiance. The engine was not slowed up for any love of the camel—whom no man loves—or through fear of a lawsuit, for the owner is held for damages if caught; but the American cow-catcher is evidently not designed for the removal of camels, and woe to the engineer if they mix up with the running gear of his locomotive! For him it means a day's work in making his engine again presentable.

At nine in the evening, with a third Baldwin, we left Shendi for Khartum, across a desert stretch of one hundred and five miles, where eighty new culverts and bridges in course of construction give an idea of the disastrous importance of a haboob (tropical downpour) on these waterless wastes. As this last section of the railway lies well within the limits of the rain belt, washouts, which wreck the line for miles and stop all transport for days, have not been infrequent. For this reason I had been strongly advised while at Halfa to carry six days' provisions for the thirty-hour journey; but fortunately on this occasion we found the line open, the night remained clear, and at three the next morning we reached the railway terminus, Halfiyeh. The brick station at Halfiyeh lay a little back from the bank of the Blue Nile. Beyond the broad expanse of swiftly flowing waters, changing from black to brown, and then to dirty yellow as night became day, appeared Khartum, the white palace of the Sirdar rising conspicuous above the green palms. On the river itself an occasional native craft came floating down with the current, now bow first, now stern, its master indifferent. Near the farther shore a river steamer was slowly churning its way against the stream, while beside the bank lay strings of small boats loading and unloading, one of which, after long importuning, was obtained to carry me and my possessions to their destination.

The native nuggar, built of rough-hewn planks laid edge on edge one above another and fastened together with spikes, has a round bottom and blunt ends. The space within is obstructed by rude thwarts which, in place of ribs, serve to stiffen the structure; behind trails an enormous

rudder, while amidships on occasion can be erected a short mast carrying a huge square or three-cornered sail. At other times it is propelled by the current, or by wooden sticks cut some four inches square

journey to Khartum and landed me near a large clump of date-palms, in the shade of which, scanty at the best, I pitched my tent.

Two Syrians in government service soon



Drawn by Fernand Lungren

#### THE OLD AND THE NEW

and lashed end to end, making a primitive sweep twenty-five feet in length—the Sudanese substitute for an oar. Thanks to rather primitive calking, the boat is fairly water-tight, and, given sufficient time, usually reaches its destination without upsetting. Such was the clumsy craft which bore me over the final stage of the

appeared from their adjacent mud house, inviting me to share their breakfast and offering the use of their one-roomed mansion. On my declining the latter, they sent an angareb to my tent, and so I took up my quarters in Khartum, where I rested for several days.

Khartum! Through what strange vicis-

situdes it has passed, this city with its thousands of inhabitants, for years the capital of the great Sudan, the residence of Egypt's governor-general, the center of the trade of the great expanse stretching from the Sahara to Equatoria, which fifty years ago had its corps of foreign consuls and its hundreds of foreign traders. Then came the Mahdi with his invincible host of fanatical followers, burying Gordon beneath a shower of spears, uprooting and destroying every vestige of civilization in the sack which followed, and then departing, leaving Khartum a waste. For thirteen years the site of the city lay desolate, a few wretched huts alone remaining to perpetuate the name, while across the White Nile, extending for miles along its banks, rose the new capital of the kingdom of the all-powerful Khalifa Abdullah, a city boasting a population of over four hundred thousand souls—that former ferry-station, Omdurman.

For thirteen years barbaric, fanatical cruelty continued unbridled; then came the avenging army, for which, through all those years of ceaseless preparation, "Khartum and Gordon" had been the watch-word. Below the blue hill of Kerreri, rising from the plain a few miles away, Abdullah met it. That night his invincible host was crushed and scattered, twenty-seven thousand of his men lay dead or wounded on the field, and he himself was a hopeless fugitive, flying from relentless enemies who knew no rest; until, a year later, surrounded by his faithful body-guard, he too fell, fighting to the last, like the brave man he was. And Omdurman? It melted away. The Mahdi's tomb, that Kaaba of the Sudan, has been razed to the ground; the suk (bazaar), where were once to be seen all the peoples and products of central Africa, is fast disappearing, for the great city is being abandoned by its merchants as well as by the new rulers of the land. To-day scarcely fifty thousand of its people remain, and a few years hence it will be a thing of the past, as is the empire whose capital it was.

Khartum is of greater interest from its historical associations than from its present appearance. The town of to-day, occupying but a small portion of the former city, consists largely of native huts of mud and straw, and a market-place of most primitive nature. Straight, broad streets, however, are being run through this section,

trees are being planted on each side of them, and here and there are springing up the more or less ornamental brick buildings of the foreign traders. Already the National Egyptian Bank has erected a new building, while along the water-front are the palace, the government buildings, and the club and mess buildings of the British officers, for the most part built of brick mixed and baked on the spot.

Still farther up the bank of the Blue Nile are the unfinished barracks for the proposed British garrison—at the time of my visit there was not a British Tommy south of Cairo—and the half-completed Gordon College, which does not seem greatly to excite the interest or meet the approbation of those on the spot. It is generally considered to be ahead of the times, for in the depopulated Sudan there are no students to be found; every hand is needed to bring back the mimosa-overgrown grain-land to its former fruitful condition, and an industrial school for such an end would perhaps be at present more advantageous than a college for the higher education of natives who can neither read nor write. Add to this the naturally suspicious nature of the native, who, in spite of all assurances, fears that attempts will be made to draw away his children from the faith of Islam, and consequently holds himself aloof, and the prospects of the institution do not appear of a roseate hue.

The Sudanese are a restless people, easily roused to a state of fanaticism in religious matters. This the late resistless uprising under the preaching and leadership of the Mahdi, who proclaimed himself Mohammed's successor and the regenerator of Islam, has conclusively shown. With nothing as a basis for his claims but the ascetic life of a dervish zealot, he gathered a small body of followers who, making up for their poverty of weapons by their reckless bravery, cut to pieces the detachments of government troops sent to capture him.

These miracles, as they were considered, becoming noised abroad, brought thousands to his standard; in a few months, with equal ease, he had annihilated a well-armed force of ten thousand men under European officers, and when he died, a few months after the fall of Khartum, he was the all-powerful ruler of millions, from whom he received honors almost divine. The merciless rule of his successor, the

Khalifa Abdullah, who strengthened his grasp by the slaughter of thousands and depopulated whole districts, taught the survivors too late their error, which, however, would not in the least prevent its repetition should occasion again arise. Hence the action of the government in forbidding all attempts at proselyting among the Moslem tribes in the present unsettled state of the country seems well grounded.

A new mosque and a capacious bazaar will soon be among the attractions of the city, and in time will come the railway-bridge over the Blue Nile, another step in the realization of the Cape to Cairo Railway. Even now Khartum is rapidly re-assuming the old importance which her location at the junction of the two Niles will always naturally confer upon her.

Sennaar, well up the Blue Nile, is already in direct water communication with the city, and a regular line of river steamers has been established, running to Gondokoro, the head of navigation on the White Nile, eleven hundred miles above Khartum and only a few hundred from Victoria Nyanza, to which a railway from the east African coast is in course of construction. Projected railways to Kasala, on the Abyssinian frontier, and to Suakim, on the Red Sea coast, are only further proofs of the opening up of the Sudan and its products to the outside world.

On the afternoon of my arrival the mercury in my tent crept slowly to  $117^{\circ}$ . Then came heavy clouds out of the east; a hurricane bent the tree-tops, strewing the ground with half-ripe dates, covering the river with threatening waves, and filling the air with blinding, stinging sand. After fifteen minutes of this, amid thunder and lightning and the roaring of the wind, the rain descended in floods. For thirty minutes the downpour continued, the mercury falling forty degrees, and then suddenly the storm ceased, the clouds disappeared, the sunset faded into a rich afterglow, and a deliciously fresh evening was upon us. With the deepening dusk all signs of life along the river-front disappeared. A lazy nuggar, crawling along below the lofty sun-baked bank in search of an anchorage for the night, or a group of belated water-carriers, descending to the water's edge to fill their heavy jars once more, alone broke in upon the prevailing quiet.

For a mile or more I wandered aim-

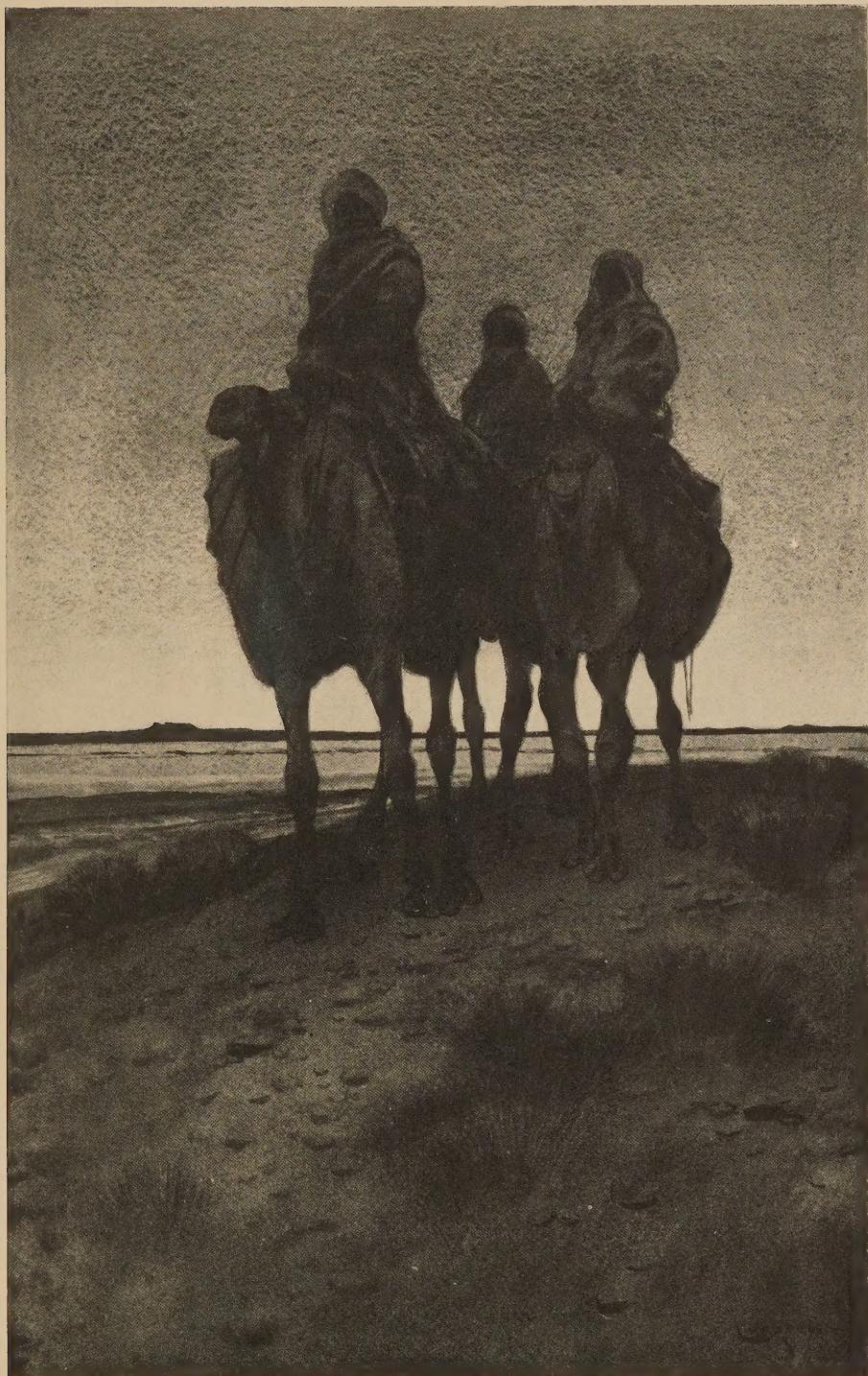
lessly along the rough path high above the stream without encountering man or beast, until in the neighborhood of the palace my reverie was suddenly interrupted by the sharp rattle of arms, and two sentries with rifles at "present" confronted me. Challenged? Certainly not, for who could I be, a white man in riding-togs, but a British officer off duty, before whom no native soldier wishes to be caught napping.

It is to the courtesy of G\_\_\_\_\_, the post chaplain, that I owe most of the pleasant hours I passed in Khartum. It was he who escorted me through the palace, the furnishings of which seemed hopelessly at variance with their desert surroundings, and where, in the Sirdar's office, an enormous pair of elephant's tusks, the gift of some native chief, was leaning against the London roll-top desk. Descending the great stairway to the corridor before the guard-room, we paused a moment before the simple slab marking the spot where Gordon fell, and later, mounted on beautiful Arab ponies, galloped out to the cemetery in the desert where lie those few who have found Christian burial in Khartum.

It was in the house of this gentleman that I was made to feel at home even in far-away Khartum. At dinner, behind his master's chair and on the lookout for his slightest wish, stood a little Baggara boy who in his short life had passed through strange vicissitudes of fortune. Probably he himself remembers but little of his years of service under the Khalifa, but enough that, when his mighty master was slain, he was bearer of the Khalifa's water-bottle, and it was with this still grasped in his hand, lying upon Abdullah's body, that he was found by the victors.

At this time there were in Khartum no more than forty "Britishers," commanding officers of the Sudanese battalions in garrison there, or officials in the new civil government. Such members of their families as brave the frontier life at all are invariably sent out of the country at the beginning of the hot season, and every officer looks forward to the leave of absence which will enable him to do likewise, for the heat in June and July is nothing to make light of.

On account of another violent haboob the evening preceding my departure, I was unable to accept a kind invitation to dine at the officers' mess, which at the time I



Drawn by Fernand Lungren. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

DAWN IN THE DESERT

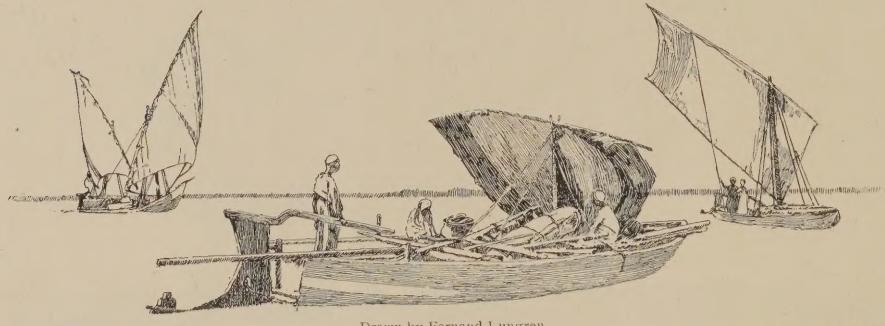
much regretted, for no more genial or hospitable gentleman exists than the British frontier officer. However, in this instance my disappointment may have been fortunate. Indeed, G—— had intimated that my proposed journey would be considered a reckless undertaking and would therefore not be regarded with special favor at headquarters, and government disapprobation would have been fatal to all my plans.

Heretofore a canoe had never been seen in the Sudan; all who had noticed this one regarded it as a mere toy, and the descent of the cataracts in so frail a craft was considered not only impossible

but suicidal. As an American, I was received at all points with open-handed friendship by these British officers, and only their feelings of personal and national responsibility for my well-being would have induced them to interfere. Had I been a Continental or a Levantine, my proceedings, so long as they did not interfere with the welfare of the state, would have been regarded with utter indifference or summarily prohibited.

Thus it happened that at dawn of the 17th of July, without let or hindrance by the Khartum authorities, I started on my canoe journey to Cairo.

(To be continued.)



Drawn by Fernand Lungren

GYASSA

NUGGAR WITH MATTING SAIL

NUGGAR WITH SQUARE SAIL

## BY THE WAY

BY CHRISTIAN GAUSS

I GROPED among the hills, and heard  
One singing by the way;  
Lo, turning toward the east, my road  
Stretched out to meet the day!

This man had taken joy to wife,—  
No other charm he had,  
A stranger singing into life,—  
And all the hills were glad.



Century Feb. '03



BY WILLIAM GAGE ERVING

WITH PICTURES BY FERNAND LUNGREN

PART II<sup>1</sup>

AT daybreak of the 17th of July, 1901, I set out from Khartum on my river journey of eighteen hundred miles to Cairo.

A day's soaking in the river and a coat of spar varnish had brought my heat-parched canoe back into perfect condition, and my outfit had been completed by the addition of a few cooking-utensils and an abundance of bread, rice, and canned goods. The baggage occupied the middle of the boat, lashed firmly to floor and thwarts, while doubled up in the bow was my servant, a Cairene, Hassan Mohammed by name.

This man, highly recommended to me for the occasion, had up to this time performed his duties of servant and cook fairly well. Under his charge the canoe had made the long journey by river and desert to Khartum without accident, but now, at the very beginning of the voyage, he "flunked" utterly. Though a son of the desert, he had no sand. A few miles of choppy water, with an occasional wavelet over the gunwale, blanched his face with terror. "Never can we descend into such a high water in this so small a boat!" he declared; and so a little below Omdurman, when he begged

to accompany me along the bank till smoother water was reached, I permitted him to land. Forthwith he girded up his loins and sped in the direction of the city, and as my servant I saw him no more. I heard of him, however. That same night he reported at Khartum that my boat had swamped and he alone survived, whereupon, as he subsequently stated, "for four days was I thrown into prison."

The first day's journey was an uneventful one, the course being through smooth water for the best part of the way. The river was filled with islands some several miles in extent, while the banks were high, usually overgrown with scrub and mimosa, and deserted save for an occasional group of round straw huts with pointed roofs, from which a native now and then emerged to stare at my strange craft. My only map, an old one dating from the days of Gordon, was so full of inaccuracies that I almost immediately lost all account of my location, and it was only toward evening, as I encountered a few stretches of quick water and found the level country giving way to a ridge of blue hills running across the river's course, that I decided that I

<sup>1</sup> See the preliminary narrative, "From Cairo to Khartum," in THE CENTURY for January, 1903.

was approaching the head of the Shabluka, or Sixth Cataract. On a little island opposite a bold, rocky height beside the river, and just below the first series of rapids which constitute the Shabluka, I halted for the night. It was a tiny bit of land, consisting of a long, low spit of sand, at one end of which the soil rose some twenty feet above the water and was covered with bushes and rank undergrowth.

Into the very heart of the islet ran an arm of the river, forming a good shelter for the canoe, while a bit of smooth sand among the bushes offered an ideal sleeping-place. The sun had already set, and in less than thirty minutes dusk had changed to night.

Too weary from my first day's run to trouble to build a fire, I regaled myself on bread and cold meat, and, rolled in my blankets, fell fast asleep.

In the Shabluka pass we have one of the many instances in which the Nile has hurled itself at an opposing mountain barrier and cut its way through. In fact, it often seems to select these unpropitious places for its course, when on each side, a few miles away, there is a tolerably level, unbroken expanse of desert.

For ten miles the river twists in and out before escaping to the open once more. Its current is very rapid, making it well-nigh impassable at low water because of the numerous rocks; but at the time of my descent the summer flood was well along, and all but a few of these barriers were hidden below the surface, their presence being marked only by occasional eddies.

Hence as a cataract the Shabluka was a distinct disappointment, and only the desolate grandeur of the gorge and the wild, swirling current redeemed the situation.

By noon the clouds had disappeared, the breeze had died away, and the rays of the sun beat down upon my pith helmet with a fierceness truly appalling. An almost irresistible drowsiness stole over me, and it was only by faithfully counting my paddle-strokes that I was able to avoid falling asleep in the bottom of the boat. At length, late in the afternoon, the heat diminished and signs of life once more appeared.

Nearly every sand-bank that I passed was tenanted by geese, ducks, cranes, and many other smaller water-birds, not to mention families of big, clumsy white pelicans, which abounded everywhere. Rarely did these hundreds of birds evince fear on

my approach; in fact, more than once an unusually inquisitive pelican swam out to interview the stranger, and after silently observing him for some moments, sedately returned to its company.

At sunset I was floating peacefully in the middle of the river, which seemed to stretch away boundlessly before me. To my left was a good-sized native village, where shouts and the beating of tomtoms proclaimed some celebration. Not wishing to join in these festivities, I began to search for some quieter place in which to pass the night, and presently reached a tiny island that seemed to answer my needs.

Rounding the farthest point, I found



ALSO LOOKING FOR A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT

myself in a little cove from which a slope of sand ascended to the underbrush above high-water mark, as in my camping-place of the preceding night. I was about to run ashore when I perceived that, contrary to my expectations, the island was inhabited. Descending the slope in front of me in a nonchalant manner, his enormous head slowly swaying from side to side, his long tail sweeping the sand in graceful curves, appeared the lord of the demesne, that terror of the native, a crocodile, some dozen feet long.

This creature, once so common in the Nile, is now absolutely extinct north of the Second Cataract, and it is only south of Khartum that he is to be found in numbers. Unlike our Florida alligator, he is not an agreeable companion. Instances of his sweeping men off the bank and disappearing with them to the bottom are not rare, and where he is common no native dares approach the riverside after nightfall. My new acquaintance stopped, and after surveying me intently for a moment, turned his head, and seemed to hold converse with friends hidden in driftwood and brush beyond. Having apparently apprised them of the arrival of a guest, he again advanced toward me, a smile of welcome plainly visible on his features.

That toothful smile recalled me to myself, and I abruptly took my departure, leaving him still regarding my strange behavior in open-mouthed surprise.

For fifteen minutes I paddled vigorously, and in the deepening dusk began to search for another and quieter place. A white bird on the shore attracted my attention, and I headed for it, having no objection to such company. But, alas! as I neared the bank I saw a large black object slide from it into the water with a splash. For an instant I stopped, and then paddled hard for the land, thinking that to be the safest place under the circumstances.

Why did this wretched crocodile number two, instead of continuing on his way, stop in the mud not five yards from the bank? Suddenly there was a prodigious scraping along the boat's keel, then a succession of sledge-hammer blows, which shook the little craft from end to end, while spray filled the air and the stork flew screaming away.

For a moment I stared helplessly, expecting to see the brute's nose appearing

through the bottom of the canoe; then the instinct of self-preservation asserted itself, and suddenly remembering that the crocodile does not like the sound of the human voice, I made night hideous with yells, beating the water savagely with the flat of my paddle meanwhile. For a few seconds pandemonium reigned, and then blessed quiet. My friend had left as suddenly as he had appeared. But the desire to possess this land had left me. I steered for the open, and it was not until the danger of capsizing in the darkness became more vivid than the recollection of my last encounter that I again ventured shoreward and hurriedly scrambled up the steep bank, taking the boat's painter with me. My troubles were not at an end, however. A rising gale of wind rendered vain all attempts at lighting a fire, while clouds of fine sand saturated any article of food exposed for a moment. Thunder and lightning, too, gave warning of the approaching haboob, against which there was not the slightest shelter.

Crocodiles or no crocodiles, I must visit the water's edge again; but my visit was not unduly prolonged. Throwing some of my belongings up to the top of the bank, I laboriously dragged the half-emptied canoe to the same place, and, turning it on its side, bottom to the wind, lashed it firmly to the scrub. In its lee I spread my tent and blankets, and though the outer layers were soaked in the deluge which followed, the innermost fortunately escaped, and the rest of that night I passed half buried in sand, sleeping and shivering alternately.

Next morning, three hours after embarking, I approached Shendi, and recognized, in the large tree-shaded building on the right bank, the officers' quarters which had been pointed out to me on my way to Khartum. The river was smooth, and the current carried me rapidly across the broad bend toward this spot. Intently watching it for any signs of civilized man, I paid little attention to a couple of large nuggars which, as I passed, cast off from the shore, hoisted sail, and came swiftly bearing down upon me from behind. Neither did I notice that they were manned by blacks in khaki uniform; nor did I pay special attention to the loud shouts with which I was greeted, but considering them only friendly hails, simply waved my paddle in reply

and continued on my way serenely. Then it was that I saw a partly clad white man rush down the bank pouring forth a volley of commands in Arabic, which was followed by a few sharp orders close to my ear; and hastily turning, I saw the first nuggar about to run me down. "Clumsy navigation!" I thought, and for safety straightway ran full tilt into the bank, where my boat was instantly seized by two armed blacks, while others came running up from all directions. While in blank amazement I was still endeavoring to recover my balance, imperiled by this abrupt halt, the officer came up. "Good morning," said he, civilly enough. "I am afraid I shall have to ask you to stop—orders from Khartum to arrest you." Then he showed me the following astonishing telegram:

commandant shendi an american left khartum yesterday in a canoe stop him wire berber

While I gazed at him in utter stupefaction, he continued: "You've got a blooming nerve to run by my boats put out there to stop you. It's good luck for you they had orders not to shoot, but the blackies below and out on that sand-bank might not have been so particular." Then he cheerfully remarked that as the guard-house was unfinished, I should have to be his prisoner at the club, whither we proceeded, followed by a file of soldiers bearing my canoe and kit.

Arrived at the mess, the commandant presented me to the several officers present, who regarded me curiously. Clad as I was in jersey, trunks, and native slippers, my head covered with a sun-helmet, which, though immense, failed to hide my unshaven and begrimed condition, my appearance warranted it. Never was arrest conducted more genially. Bath, shaving-material, and wardrobe were placed at my disposal, and half an hour later, clothed once more in civilized attire, I was enjoying a sumptuous breakfast in the airy dining-room, the walls of which were decorated with flags and weapons.

Three or four officers were lounging about, smoking or devouring the lately arrived weekly mail,—the day (Friday) being the official sabbath,—and my detention formed the subject of conversation. Through an officer from Halfa they had already learned of my plans, and it was

the consensus of opinion that it was on account of their impracticability, from the government point of view, that I had been held up. "But why was he allowed to start from Khartum?" asked one. I suggested that my intentions had not been advertised at that point. "And if he wants to get smashed up and drowned, why should the government interfere?" inquired Bimbashi K——. Before I could reply, the commandant's boy, "Australia," entered, chattering excitedly as he saluted. "There's trouble in the kitchen," remarked the Bimbashi: "we must n't miss it"; and we hastily adjourned thither, meeting on the way the cook, who triumphantly displayed, held at arm's-length upon two sticks, the remains of a five-foot Egyptian cobra which he had just killed among his stewpans.

Though one-time capital of the ancient kingdom of Meroë, and the reputed home of Sheba's queen, Shendi now presents not a trace of its former greatness. A few straw and mud huts amid acres upon acres of ruins are the sole remains of a city which in 1819 defied Mohammed Ali when his son came to collect a tribute of grain which the Shaggia tribe considered excessive. Protesting in vain, at length the wily chiefs feigned compliance, and invited the pasha and his attendants to a banquet, in the course of which the durra would be delivered at the door. In the midst of the feast the crackling of flames was heard, the grain piled about had been fired, and Ismail and his followers perished to a man. Great was the father's wrath. The next year he appeared at the head of an army, burned the town, and slew all the inhabitants.

From this blow Shendi never recovered, and in the days of the dervishes was too unimportant to suffer, while Metemmeh, across the river, had become the populous terminus of the caravan route from Korti across the Bayuda desert, one link in the long journey to Khartum, and carried on a prosperous trade. And now Metemmeh, its merchants scattered and its fighting-men massacred by the Khalifa, has a population of only seventy-five men and twelve hundred women.

To the south of the barracks are the "married quarters" of the Sudanese troops, scores of straw huts arranged in rows with military precision, outside of each a light straw shelter with the omnipresent angareb,

or bed, beneath it. The Sudanese soldier is enlisted for life, his wage is higher than that of the Egyptian, averaging fifty piasters a month, and as long as he is fighting he is perfectly content. Barrack life, however, is very distasteful to him, and in these days of peace recruits come in but slowly. Nearly every man is married, generally possessing but one wife, who, with his children, receives a regular allowance of dura from the government. This is not an onerous burden upon the commissariat, however, for the number of children is always very small, twenty children to a company of one hundred men being a high average.

A morning gallop into the desert, luncheon at noon in the breeze of a big punka, followed by a siesta till five, when the broiling, choking heat of midday was lessening and we all came together at the tea-table, dinner at eight on the veranda by candlelight, and a round of story-telling until bedtime—such was the program of my first day's captivity.

Khartum was not heard from till the next day at luncheon, when a telegram was brought in to the commandant. This, I was informed, permitted me to proceed on condition that I should not attempt the passage of the Fourth Cataract in my canoe. But I declared that I must go down the river, and I would not make another trip on that railroad. A council of war was held, and Bimbashi K.— finally suggested that with camels I could make a carry round the cataract. "It 's a good hundred and fifty miles of rather bad going, but you should do it in a week," said he; and orders were given for a camel to be brought that we might experiment in loading a canoe. This proceeding, which took place in the garden, appeared dangerous to the welfare of the canoe and roused the ire of the camel, which seemed to consider such a burden beneath his dignity. Unwillingly he knelt, snarling, rolling his head from side to side, and continually blowing out of his mouth and sucking in again a red membranous balloon.

Notwithstanding his objections, however, we at length devised a fairly satisfactory way of fastening the craft, and the beast was released, while that same afternoon an order was sent by wire to Abu Hamed to have four camels in readiness for me upon my arrival.

I now hastened my arrangements for de-

parture. Bimbashi N——, who was on sick-leave, invalided from a surveying expedition up the Atbara, accepted an invitation to accompany me as far as the Meroë pyramids, thirty miles below. The whole mess assembled on the bank to see us off, and so I took leave of the kindest of hosts and the gentlest of jailers. We reached our destination about ten that evening, camped on the sun-baked mud-bank, and early the next morning N—— made his way inland, flagged a "wildcat" engine, and returned up the river.

The difficulty of visiting the pyramids, lying on the hillsides some three or four miles away, now confronted me. However, a scantily clothed native appearing at this moment, I accosted him, and eking out my Arabic, which consisted of the equivalents for "donkey" and "pyramid," with numerous realistic gesticulations, sought to convey to his understanding my desires as follows: a bowl of fresh milk, a place of safety for my canoe and outfit, and a donkey and guide to the pyramids, for all of which he should have a suitable reward upon my return. Strange to say, he comprehended; and in half an hour I had finished a breakfast of bread and milk, my goods had been brought to his straw hut, and one of the women had taken her seat near by, on guard, when he reappeared with two donkeys.

Not far from the river the trail crossed an extensive tract covered with broken bricks, the site of some city of old, among the ruins of which appeared two or three uncouth animals carved in granite, which perhaps once guarded the approach to some now vanished temple. Then followed a ride of more than an hour over a gravelly desert to the nearest of the three groups of pyramids. This consisted of fifteen more or less dilapidated structures, from the top of one of which some forty others could be distinguished, mere heaps of debris. The other two clusters, rising from the hills a mile beyond and numbering respectively seven and eighteen pyramids, were in a much better state of preservation. Faced with carefully hewn black stone, they varied greatly in size, the largest probably being less than seventy-five feet high, and were much more slender than those of Egypt. From the east side of each projected a small temple chamber, the portal, in a few instances, adorned with low reliefs,

while at its farther end, and cut into the side of the pyramid itself, was an apparently walled-up doorway, the Winged Sun carved on its lintel. This had deceived treasure-hunters, who in a few cases had removed the stones, only to find rubble beyond.

Scarcely anything is known of the history of these pyramids, but the old idea that they were an early example of Egyptian art, monuments of the advance of a nation invading Egypt from the south long before the days of the great pyramids, has been abandoned for the less fascinating theory that they date from the days of the Ethiopian kingdom which flourished when Egypt's glory was only a memory. But though their age be but three thousand years instead of double that number, there is something wonderfully impressive in their appearance, rising as they do in the midst of the desert miles from any living thing, while, more fortunate than their nobler and more ancient brethren of Gizeh, their solitude and dignity in the passing of the centuries remain undisturbed by the presence of venal Bedouin or electric trolley-car.

Early in the morning of the third day out from Shendi I was drifting slowly along, watching an enormous crocodile which, having laboriously waddled off a sand-bank, was lazily swimming across my track not a hundred feet away, displaying some six feet of head for my edification. Suddenly there broke in upon the stillness a faint, distant "chug-chug," and, like a flash, the great head disappeared from view. Not half a mile below me, rounding a wooded point and working slowly up the stream close to shore, appeared a little steamer of the type I had seen on the Halfa reach, flying the Union Jack and the star and crescent, emblematic of the joint control of England and Egypt in the Sudan. Though a little surprised by the appearance of a steamboat in this part of the world, I paid no attention to this new arrival other than to get out of its way, and with this intent steered for mid-stream. The steamer went in the same direction. I therefore headed inshore, whereupon the stranger did likewise, bumping her nose into the bank not ten yards from my stranded boat, while a crowd of blacks poured off her deck and came toward me on the run. In far less time

than it takes to tell, I was surrounded, seized, and dragged from my canoe, and in the grasp of half a dozen natives was hustled aboard the steamer. A big fellow in drawers and turban standing amidships appeared to be the captain, but without debate or parley I was stripped of my belongings and unceremoniously dropped into the hold. Hardly had I reached the bottom before the hatch was clapped on and I was in Stygian blackness. In a few moments I heard shouts and the pattering of naked feet on the deck above, and the renewed sound of paddle-strokes indicated that the steamer had backed off the bank and was proceeding to parts unknown.

Through all this not a word had been spoken to me, nor had I uttered one, so surprised was I to find myself attacked by a crowd of black pirates sailing under the British flag. For a moment I was stunned; then dismay was succeeded by wrath, but being unable in the darkness to discover anything wherewith to hammer on the deck above, I was obliged to content myself with shouting anathemas, threats, and commands in all the tongues I could master. With a tropical midday sun beating on the iron deck, it was hot in that hold; and when, after half an hour of this suffocating imprisonment, the hatch was lifted off, I welcomed the air with a gasp of relief.

This did not mean freedom, however, for about the opening was posted a guard of five half-naked men, who stared down at me with curiosity. Among the black faces I recognized the man with the turban, to whom I shouted the names of every British pasha, bey, and bimbashi I had ever met or heard of, coupling them with the words "telegraph" and "Shendi." As I proceeded, a "melanotic pallor" overspread his countenance, a hurried consultation followed, and almost immediately the boat was turned about and began swiftly descending the river. In about twenty minutes we brought up against the bank, and after a short delay I was lifted out and, still under guard, now reinforced by a khaki-clad Egyptian, was conducted ashore.

Here for half a mile we followed a narrow track through the mimosa, which ended abruptly at a line of rails and a mud hut whence came the click of a telegraph instrument, sure token of a Sudan railway station. As we entered the low doorway I

noticed the usual mats, blankets, and angareb, while attached to the mud wall a telephone met my astonished gaze.

Motioning to the Egyptian sergeant, evidently the station-master, I pointed to this, repeating "Bimbashi N——, Shendi," over and over, and then in my most dignified manner sat down on the angareb and awaited developments.

A one-sided conversation in Arabic followed; the sergeant became more and more excited, and presently, turning about, saluted and handed me the receiver. Never was English voice more welcome than was N——'s, although over the telephone and sixty miles away. In a few words he was informed of my predicament, and, as much astonished as I was at the happening, promised to wire the facts at once to the British *mudir* (governor of the province) at Berber, from whom we might expect despatches very soon.

All this and the orders to the station-master which followed had a great effect upon my captors, whose arrogance changed to obsequiousness; and when I started to return to the river they were all salaams.

Perceiving that the title of "bimbashi" did not appeal to me, they deferentially addressed me as "bey"; the steamer's tiny saloon was thrown open, and my suggestions regarding food and drink were promptly acted upon. That wretched black, the captain, stood humbly at the farther end of the room, which no one else save the cook *pro tem.* ventured to approach. So I sat in state an hour or more, when the sergeant again appeared with a message for the captain, who thereupon, with a most profound salaam, intimated that my further residence upon the steamer would be of my own volition.

Having no desire to prolong my acquaintance with the steamer *El Tahra* and her ex-dervish crew, I prepared to proceed on my way at once.

A dozen pairs of hands assisted in re-loading and casting off my boat, which, notwithstanding its rough hauling over the vessel's side, I found to be uninjured; the hem of my burnoose was lifted to as many lips; and, being once more free, I resumed my interrupted cruise.

At the time I believed the captain to be acting under orders, although executing them in an inexcusably harsh manner; but on my arrival at Berber I learned that he

was entirely without authority in his behavior. His orders were to take his steamer to Omdurman for repairs, but accidentally overhearing directions to the military police to apprehend me, he had unwarrantably taken this upon himself, hoping thus to curry favor with the government, and glad of an opportunity to lord it over a white man. He had played the part of a privateer without letters of marque, of which he doubtless repented later, when, upon reaching Omdurman, he found awaiting him a severe reprimand and a hundred lashes.

That night I camped on the bank of a little back-water not ten miles from Berber. My afternoon's journey had not been entirely uninterrupted. Some boatmen towing a nuggar up the river had raced me along the bank, shouting to me to halt; and a village sheik, a very large man mounted on a very little donkey, had been summoned and had joined in the pursuit with numerous followers. Fortunately, none had firearms; I kept out of reach of other missiles, and after a race of four miles, finally paddled to the other side of a sheltering island, where I lost sight of them. A few miles farther on was the mouth of the Atbara, but my intention to land and inspect the new bridge was nipped in the bud by the appearance of a boat which put out from shore and headed toward me. Here, too, my visitors were unarmed, and, as they had only native oars, I was soon able to distance them.

A haboob arose during the night, and though there was but little rain, the wind continued, the river became very rough, and in the morning I spent over half an hour working my way across into the lee of the shore, where alone my boat could make progress.

Thus I was creeping along under the bank when I saw a white camel speeding up the riverside, ridden by a native who waved a packet of portentous size as he shouted to me. The appearance of the envelop persuaded me to give up my advantageous position on the water and come to land. The camel knelt, the native dismounted, and, salaaming, presented to me a big brown package which was well over a foot across. Inside of this was another envelop of ordinary size, containing a welcome to Berber from the mudir, and stating further that the bearer would conduct me to the town. I

nodded assent, and the black, remounting, started off down-stream at a pace which my canoe was barely able to equal. He was soon joined by several Egyptian soldiers, and the cavalcade, following first the river and then a narrow irrigation canal barely deep enough to float the boat, finally halted beside a deep pool, its high banks covered by a grove of palms. Here I was greeted by the Egyptian governor of the district, who offered me a horse, and together we rode to the government house, not half a mile away.

It is to the mudir of Berber, Bimbashi S——, that I owe in large measure the success of my expedition. Entering with enthusiasm into my plans, he assisted me in every possible way. He it was who furnished me with letters to the various officials below, notifying them in advance of my coming, and even requesting the mudir of the next province, Dongola, similarly to assist me. He it was who provided me with a servant to accompany me to that point, a distance of over four hundred miles. Although recognizing the authority of the instructions from Khartum, and agreeing with them as to the impracticability of descending the Fourth Cataract alone in my canoe, he fully agreed with me as to the undesirability of making the long portage from Abu Hamed by caravan, and all other possible routes or methods of reaching Merawi were considered. The result of the discussion was a compromise by which I was permitted to make the attempt, but under the guidance of government pilots.

Two delightful days were spent at Berber in the enjoyment of the cordial hospitality of the mudir at the government house, or exploring every corner of the straggling and half-ruined town on one of his ponies; and at daylight on Friday, July 26, I set out on the third stage of my journey from Berber to Abu Hamed, one hundred and thirty miles. In the bow sat my new servant, Suleiman Mohammed by name, a lean, black-skinned Sudanese, tall and slender, as are all his race, his thin cheeks disfigured by scars of the deep tribal gashes which every native bears from infancy.

His clothing consisted of white, baggy drawers, a coarsely woven shirt of dark blue, a fancy jacket, and a much battered Turkish fez, of which he was inordinately proud. Unable to speak a word of English,

he watched me like a cat whenever he made any motion, to see if I disapproved of it, and modeled his future behavior accordingly. In the time he was with me he rapidly picked up words, and in the course of a few days knew thoroughly my daily program as regarded cooking and camping, truly not elaborate.

I did not allow him to handle a paddle, though occasionally in rough water he used the boat-hook, and usually he lay sprawled out in the canoe, his bare arms and legs dangling over the sides, his shirt and fez removed, and his shiny skin dripping with perspiration under the blazing sun. But whenever he hailed a native to learn our whereabouts he invariably donned his fez and spoke in most lordly tones. Such was Suleiman Mohammed, faithful and plucky throughout.

On leaving Berber, we reentered the river by the lower end of the irrigation canal, and early in the afternoon reached the head of the Fifth Cataract, which consists of the El Umar, El Bagara, and Abu Hashim rapids above Abu Hamed, and the Mograt below. Through the first three we managed to pass without incident, sometimes picking a channel, again necessarily running haphazard through the chutes between huge black boulders.

On the afternoon of the second day from Berber we entered a stretch of open water bordered by green-clad banks, a most acceptable substitute for the rocky, inhospitable region, with its fifty miles of rapids, now behind us; and that night our halting-place was a spit of sand where, rising above the universal stillness, could be heard the hideous screeching of the never-resting sakieh.

The sakieh is a Sudanese institution, as the shadoof is Egyptian. The latter is a water-hoist worked by hand, and is never found on the upper Nile. The sakieh consists of a large circular platform on the brink of the river, with a heavy post rising in the center, around which plods a yoke of oxen turning a clumsy wheel connected with a revolving drum. This extends over the water, and carries an endless rope of palm fiber with earthen water-jars attached. The rope is lengthened or shortened according to the height of the river, and the water is taken up and discharged into the irrigation ditch in an almost unbroken stream. This crude contrivance is contin-

ually breaking down, and much of the time of the natives is spent in repairing it. Notwithstanding this drawback, the Sudanese prefers dozing in a sort of hammock slung to the swaying pole, waking at intervals only to prod the lazy oxen, to lifting heavy buckets of water for hours at

carried my boat under cover. The government house was a two-story affair built of mud and whitewashed, but the view from the little hallway where I dined with the mamoor was unsurpassed. To the east lay the limitless desert; in the other direction the broad river swept in a magnificent curve



Drawn by Fernand Lungren  
A SAKIEH, OR WATER-HOIST

a time, as his Egyptian brother does. For the Sudanese places nothing before sleep, not even prayer, the teachings of the Koran to the contrary notwithstanding.

On the next afternoon we passed the narrow branch of the river which runs behind the island of Mograt, the banks of which were a wilderness of palms. Here the old maps locate the Mograt rapids, for what reason I know not. Certainly now, at three quarters Nile, there was no sign of them, while of the great cataract which I traversed on the following day, extending a distance of a dozen miles below Abu Hamed, no mention whatever is made. An hour later the white government house of Abu Hamed loomed up ahead, high on the bank, and presently we ran ashore, where the *mamoor*, a young Egyptian lieutenant, cordially greeted me, and several soldiers

around the wooded island of Mograt away to the southwest, as it started on its great loop of nearly seven hundred miles to Halfa; while beyond all rose the mountains of Monasir, a rich purple in the wonderful afterglow of the sunset.

No detail in the arrangements for my onward progress had been omitted by the *mamoor*. Camels had already been furnished by the neighboring desert sheiks, and were awaiting my arrival, when orders were received from the mudir at Berber announcing the change in plan. Thereupon a messenger had promptly been despatched on the sixty-mile desert march to the island of Sherri, where the Om Deras, first of the series of eight cataracts constituting the so-called Fourth, breaks the smooth water of the river; and doubtless by this time the sheik of the island held

the required pilots in readiness. In this instance the mamoor had obeyed orders, and could do no more; but for the descent of the dangerous Mograt cataract, lying at his very doors, where miles of troubled waters could be seen from where we sat, he considered himself more directly responsible, and consequently decided to have me follow the back channel around Mograt Island, thus avoiding the worst rapids altogether. With this in view, his nuggar had been brought up to the government house, where it lay awaiting the hour of my departure, when, with the morning breeze or, that failing, with the tow-rope, it was to convey me and my boat the five miles back to the head of the island which I had passed that very afternoon. For the last few days, however, the usual north wind had been lacking, and knowing that towing up-stream for that distance would consume many hours, I strongly urged attempting the cataract itself. For some time the mamoor was obdurate, for the Mograt has a very bad reputation. He would permit me to go in a nuggar, but never in an egg-shell; and only after repeated assurances from his river-men that the rapids could be safely passed at this stage of the water, did he at length reluctantly yield to my request, stipulating, however, that a guide-boat should pilot me through.

Shortly after sunrise next morning we set out. First came the guide-boat, of rude native construction, manned by two grinning blacks, bareheaded and stripped to the waist, and the pilot, an elderly man in loose white jacket and trousers, with a turban twisted about his head, who, squatting on the high stern, managed the immense rudder. My canoe, well weighted down by a heavy box of provisions added to my kit at Abu Hamed, followed at a distance of a hundred yards. In five minutes we had rounded the great curve of the river, had shot over the first opposing ridge, and were entering upon the swirling waters of the rapids. An exciting hour followed. Back and forth across the river doubled the boat of my pilots, avoiding the multitude of rocky ledges, and picking out the deep, narrow channels between, with marvelous skill; now pausing for an instant at the brink of a black descending torrent, and in a flash lost in the waves at its foot; now pulling for life to avoid a suddenly

appearing whirlpool; again clinging to the shrubbery in the lee of some tiny islet, while the rowers took breath for the next rapid; I following in their wake till my arms ached and my head swam and the canoe shipped water ominously. Ten miles passed, and at last the river again broadened out, rocks and waves disappeared, and we were gliding over an expanse of smooth water, its low, rock-strewn shores a mile apart, where I was glad to drift awhile and rest.

And now the blacks in the guide-boat ceased pulling. The bad water was passed, they could serve me no further, they were poor men and many miles from home—might they not now return? Receiving my consent, they made for the shore, where the tow-rope was brought out and the long, hard pull back to Abu Hamed began. How they dared leave me thus, with the most dangerous part of the rapids still ahead, I never understood; for they must have known that a word to the mamoor regarding their behavior would have brought upon them a severe flogging. Doubtless, however, they feared the immediate present more than the indefinite future, or possibly concluded that, after all, dead men would tell no tales.

When my faithless pilot told me that the cataract was passed he deliberately lied. I had gone barely a mile, proceeding in the very middle of the stream without a thought of danger, when just ahead a long white line appeared, spanning the entire river. In a few seconds this had developed into a barrier of spray-capped billows from which there was no escaping. In a twinkling I found myself at the top of an inclined plane of water, where the river shot over the underlying ridge in one unbroken sheet, as water over a dam in time of flood. Down this the canoe rushed with the speed of a race-horse, rose sharply on the billows beyond, hurled itself seemingly through space, and fell upon the top of a chaos of foaming waves with a crash truly appalling. A yell of terror escaped the lips of my boy as he frantically grasped the gunwales, a mass of water drenching him from head to foot. For a few moments the canoe tossed wildly about, kept head on to the waves only with the greatest difficulty, and then plunged madly through foam and eddies into the smooth water beyond.

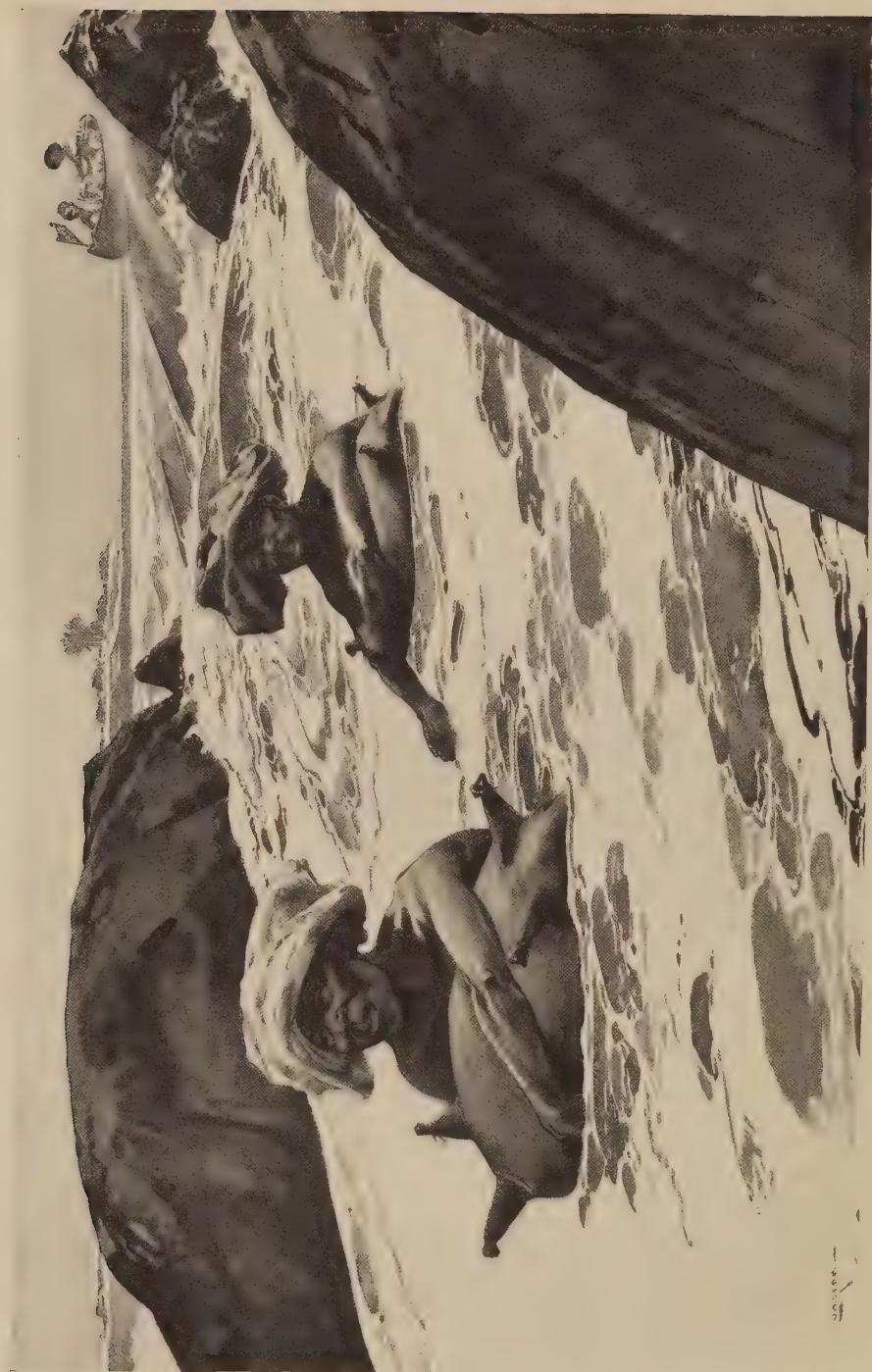
This lasted but a short distance, and scarcely had I recovered my breath when a new danger confronted me. Not a quarter of a mile ahead a ridge of rocks appeared, extending across the river, a mass of black boulders amid foam and spray of dazzling whiteness. Nowhere in this roaring inferno upon which I was being rapidly borne could I discover a sign of even the narrowest passage. Absolute destruction of the canoe seemed inevitable when, catching sight of a great flat rock the front of which, thirty feet in width, rose above the brink of the fall, I seized the last chance and headed directly for it, sheering sharply to the left when not six feet from the granite barrier. As, almost grazing its stony face, the boat sped alongside toward the maelstrom beyond, I caught up the long painter coiled at my feet and made a flying leap, landing on the sloping surface of the rock, worn smooth by long action of the water. Fortunately my bare feet did not slip, and by bracing myself the canoe was brought up with a sharp jerk. Suleiman, who throughout had behaved splendidly, sitting motionless in the bottom of the boat with both hands grasping its sides and his eyes never leaving my face, now rolled out, and in a few seconds canoe and kit were high and dry on the rock, and I was running to the brink to cool my feet, blistered from toe to heel by the scorching stone. Our desert isle stretched some three hundred feet down the stream, and below it the rapids appeared less dangerous. Here, then, we launched the canoe, and at length reached smoother water. The terrors of the Mograt lay behind us.

A few miles farther on we stopped for luncheon and rest in a shady nook on the bank below a small village. Here I was cordially welcomed by the natives, an angareb was brought and placed beneath a palm, my boy procured a gourd of milk, and soon an assemblage gathered about us as he prepared our meal. Then appeared the aged sheik of the village, feeble and blind, guided by two younger men and carrying a palm-fiber dish filled with ripe dates, which, greetings over, he presented to me as a gift of welcome. Unable to converse with him, I could only offer him a cup of tea in return, which he slowly sipped with apparent enjoyment, making as much noise in the process as possible, thereby not only cooling the beverage, but

showing his appreciation in true Sudanese style. Then, with profound salaams, he slowly retired, leaving me to finish my lunch in peace, while several of his company followed my boy to the river's edge, whither he went to wash my limited wardrobe. Taking advantage of that seldom seen luxury, soap, two of the men, when he had finished, removed their own garments and washed them by its aid, while one of the under-chiefs asked me for the remaining soapy fragment as a gift, and departed as pleased as a child therewith, to return presently with a great dish of dates.

Throughout the journey, at nothing in my equipment did the natives gaze with such longing as at my supply of soap. It was unduly large when I left Berber; a week later it was gone. It was almost the only article which had the habit of strangely disappearing by day or night, and to make a present of a tiny piece was to make the recipient a warm friend. The Sudanese river-man is a cleanly animal; he bathes constantly in the river, and washes his clothing frequently, but the white cotton cloth gives little evidence thereof. The water he uses is thick with mud. The scrubbing-board is a rock, and the cleaning is accomplished by treading underfoot for an indefinite period the muddy heap of garments.

At Sherri, which we reached at noon of the following day, we found the mamoor's messenger, an Egyptian army sergeant, and the head-men of the island waiting to receive me. Assured that everything was in readiness for my departure, I remained at the mud "rest-house" only long enough to dine, and then returned to the canoe, surprised not to find any signs of a boat in the neighborhood. Surely these people could not imagine that my canoe could carry a pilot in addition to its present burden! At my approach, two men seated on the bank busily examining a couple of goat-hide water-skins arose and salaamed. Then, having blown up the skins as tight as drum-heads, tied up the mouths with leather thongs, and stopped up any minute orifices present by whirling around a few handfuls of mud and water inside, they made ungainly turbans of their scanty clothing, and plunged into the river. Their primitive life-buoys, which they held close beneath their chests with their left arms,



Drawn by Fernand Langren. Half-tone plate engraved by S. Davis

PILOTS THROUGH THE CATARACTS

kept their heads a good two feet above the water; and, laughing and chatting unconcernedly, the two hardy swimmers were rapidly borne down-stream by the current, by the aid of which they were to descend the fifty miles of river between Sherri and Berti, where Berber Mudirieh ends and Dongola begins.

Following these cataract *reises*, who had been selected as my guides through the first half of the Fourth Cataract, I was taken, by way of a narrow arm of broken water between the islands of Sherri and Sherrari, into the north channel of the river, where the stream, smooth at first, became more and more broken, until the whole seemed to disappear in black, frowning precipices ahead. My pilots made for a narrow bit of sand at the entrance of the gorge, and signaled me to follow. From this point of vantage I could see the stream descending like a gigantic mill-race between sheer, lofty walls of rock for some hundred yards, to enter again the main channel of the river, which presented a tossing mass of waves over a mile across. Yielding to the importunities of my guides, who begged me not to attempt the descent of this chute, I disembarked, and they took the boat under their own charge. Carefully examining its contents to see that they were firmly lashed therein, they placed their air-skins inside, and, one grasping the bow and the other the stern, plunged again into the water. In a moment they were rushing madly through the foaming waves, which threatened every instant to engulf them; and then, whirling around an angle of rock, disappeared from view. We hastened to follow by land, but to reach the foot of the gorge involved a detour of half a mile over a rocky waste through which a broad roadway had been cut by nature in some bygone age. Arriving breathless at the water's edge once more, we found the two pilots seated on a low rock which rose out of the water, the canoe floating placidly beside them. The excitement of such tobogganing was too great an attraction to forgo, however; and during the remainder of the day, through the succession of similar chutes which followed, I handled the boat myself, to the great perturbation of my *reises*, whose equanimity was restored only after several successful descents.

Pushing on early the next morning, after

a night's sleep at the "rest-house" of El Kirbekan, thirty-five miles below Sherri, in two hours' paddling we reached the island of Berti, where two natives, one borne on an inflated skin, the other on a palm log, took the places of my former *reises*. Berti lies in the midst of the Fourth Cataract. Above it are the Om Deras, Tuar, and Kubenat rapids, through which I had already passed, while from the island's foot extend the rapids of Edermi, Bahak, Kandi, and Terai, an almost unbroken stretch of cataract terminating at the island of Owli, twenty-five miles below. Throughout this distance the river is broken by the large islands of Ishishi, Kandi, and Owl into numerous channels, all difficult, some impassable. In compliance with instructions from the mudir of Dongola, my new guides were to select the most practicable of these for my descent.

From now on these pilots were continually changing. They were native sheiks, each, with a reis, accompanying me to the limits of his jurisdiction, and then handing me over to the sheik of the adjoining territory; and under their guidance I followed all that day a series of narrow, tortuous channels, keeping for the most part close to the right bank. In three places there was insufficient water for the passage of the canoe amid the labyrinth of rocks; but this had been foreseen by my guides, and at each point I found collected some eight or ten men, who carried canoe and kit several hundred feet around the obstruction. In the third instance, in order to avoid a series of three rocky ledges absolutely barring navigation, a longer portage became necessary; and for half an hour I proceeded on a donkey across the scorching desert, followed by my troop of carriers. Of these the four who bore the half-emptied boat, soon wearying of the labor, impressed into service an unfortunate donkey, upon whose shoulders fell the whole burden, while the former bearers, who now had only to balance the craft, grinned triumphantly at their less fortunate brothers, still loaded down with kit and provisions.

The delays incident to changing escorts, making portages, and picking a way through the rock-infested shallows consumed so much time that it was noon of the following day before I reached the foot of Kandi Island and shot the Terai rapid. Here I took leave of my faithful

friends, the cataract sheiks, and entered upon the ten miles of more open water extending to the Gerendid, last of the rapids of the Fourth Cataract.

Here the frightful desert through which I had been journeying since leaving Abu Hamed, its desolation unbroken save about Sherri, where palms and sakihs gave proof of life, if not of prosperity, began slowly to recede from the river's edge. The tracts of golden sand and the even more forbidding crags of black gran-

moored to the bank, and groups of natives appeared working in the fields. Ahead rose conspicuously the dark-blue peak of Gebel Barkal, at the foot of which once lay Napata, capital of the kingdom of Ethiopia, and which to-day overlooks the district of Merawi, the only fertile and prosperous region in the northern Sudan. The Fourth Cataract lay behind me, and ahead extended for two hundred miles the Merawi-Dongola reach of the Nile, its whole course uninterrupted by a single rocky ridge.

It was already dusk when I reached Merawi, a collection of hamlets extending several miles along the river front, with the religious center at the new mosque rising conspicuously on the edge of the desert, and the political headquarters at the government buildings two miles farther down the stream. In the old campaigning days it was an important advanced post, and was the point from which, in the summer of 1897, Hunter's flying column set out on its



Drawn by Fernand Lungren. Half-tone plate engraved by T. Schüssler

#### THE PYRAMIDS OF NAPATA (MERAWI)

ite, rising sheer for scores of feet above the water, unbroken for miles by a single habitation, were succeeded by a belt of bright green durra, interspersed with villages of brown mud huts. The occasional doom-palm and the thorny mimosa fringing the banks were replaced by hundreds of date-palms, among the great green leaves of which hung enormous clusters of ripe fruit. The monitor, that great lizard of the Nile, a yard in length, which loves to sun itself clinging to the brush upon the bank; the flocks of ducks along the water's edge; the cranes wading in the shallows; and the gazelle timidly approaching the river for water, were to be seen no more, while in their places sheep, goats, camels, and sakihs oxen, under the charge of naked children, slaked their thirst at the water's edge. The sakihs along the bank became more frequent, until, after passing the Gerendid, they were often but a few rods apart. Here and there a nuggar, unseen heretofore below Abu Hamed, lay

brilliant succession of night marches, culminating in the surprise and annihilation of the dervish garrison at Abu Hamed. Thus was made possible the completion of the desert railway and the carrying of the war into the enemy's country. Now only a single company of troops garrisons Merawi, while the mud barrack buildings and the ruinous cavalry inclosures, with their row upon row of mud mangers, are spread over acres of ground.

The mamoor welcomed me most hospitably, and after dinner at his own house conducted me to the "palace," the residence of the mudir during the winter, when New Dongola, the other capital of the province, is rendered unendurable by swarms of black flies.

That night the moonlight flooded the garden of palms and fragrant flowers, and displayed the great stuffed crocodile hanging above the palace entrance. A light evening breeze rustled in the tree-tops, and beyond, the broad, silvery Nile murmured

drowsily, as if resting from its fierce struggle in the rocky gorges above. Half hidden in his blanket, Suleiman lay stretched on the gravel path at the foot of my angareb, and the stillness was broken only by the pacing of the sentry before the palace entrance. Such were my surroundings, in pleasant contrast to many previous camps.

The next morning at sunrise, while I was still at breakfast, the mamoor appeared to escort me to the antiquities of Merawi, an excursion for which he had made elaborate preparations the preceding evening. Starting out forthwith on two donkeys, their clumsy wooden saddles covered with soft sheepskins, we soon were ambling along over the hard, smooth sand of the desert to the pyramids of Sherri, eight miles up the river. These pyramids, eleven in number, rise upon a sandy ridge commanding a view over the valley of the Nile for many miles. Constructed of small stones of poor quality, many of their companions have disappeared, only shapeless mounds of rubble remaining to mark their sites, while the survivors are much battered and worn by time.

Not only in ancient days was this spot a burial-place for the surrounding country: even now in all directions extends a Mohammedan cemetery, and above the chaos of mounds rise three tombs of revered sheiks, rude beehive-shaped structures of brick thirty feet high, which appear almost as venerable as the near-by pyramids. Beside the open entrance of each a pious hermit has taken up his abode, who watches over the low mounds of earth within and the coarse white flags which adorn them, and occasionally fills with grain the pottery bowls lying about, making a feast for the birds. Such liberality, however, is not shown in the durra-fields below, the owners of which, knowing that in a single day these winged creatures can easily strip an entire field, erect scaffolds and post watchers thereon, who from morning till night wage war on the predators with shouts and missiles.

Descending, we rode through fields of durra, which waved high above our heads, and halted for a time in the shade of two enormous trees by a well of crystal water. Here during the heat of the day we were entertained by two village head-men, or *omdahs*, till word was brought us that the only ferry-boat of the neighborhood was

ready. Embarking to the great disgust of a waiting caravan, who thus saw dissipated all hopes of crossing the river that day, we proceeded down-stream half a dozen miles, landing on the opposite bank, where a motley crowd of Egyptian soldiers, natives,



Drawn by Fernand Lungren  
PROTECTING THE CROPS

camels, and donkeys was awaiting our arrival. Mounted now on running camels, of which the government keeps a detail at every post throughout the country, we sped over the sand toward the foot of the mountain, still a couple of miles distant. As we approached it, we encountered at more and more frequent intervals heaps of debris, until we found ourselves in the midst of a confusion of rubble and quarried blocks of stone of all sizes and shapes. Here we dismounted and for an hour wandered about, pausing now before a gigantic ram of polished granite, or the colossal figure of some ruler of olden time, whose features still remained as clear-cut as when first they were chiseled out of the unyielding stone thousands of years ago.

Two columns still stood erect amid the confusion, and close beside the steep face of the Gebel could be traced the ground-plan of a temple, the sanctuary of which, cut into the living rock and adorned with much battered reliefs, still remained, sole witness to a departed grandeur. Not quite alone, however; for half a mile away, behind the isolated mountains, rose a group of six pyramids which, in spite of the silting in of sand and the destruction of their tips, still averaged fifty feet in height.

Returning to a native village beside the river, we were received by the omdah, who escorted us to his mud hut, in the veranda of which he proceeded to entertain us in true native fashion. On both sides of the low table were placed angarebs, upon which we reclined, and, after performing our ablutions Moslem-wise, proceeded to "negotiate" the meal laid before us. This consisted of two large bowls of soup, one of vegetables, the other of small bits of mutton. Before each was also a rolled-up bundle of native durra bread, thin pancakes, some two feet in diameter, of coarsely ground meal mixed with water and baked over a hot fire. Neither knife, fork, nor spoon was to be seen, the method of procedure being to break off a piece of pancake, roll it into a cornucopia, scoop up some of the stew therewith, and convey the whole to the mouth. To seize the bits of meat in the boiling liquid required, however, more skill, and I owned to scalded finger-tips at the end of the course. Again came pitcher, basin, and towels; again we washed, and then regaled ourselves with juicy dates, while tea, served in tiny glasses, completed the repast. On leaving, I received from the omdah as a parting gift a basket of big yellow limes.

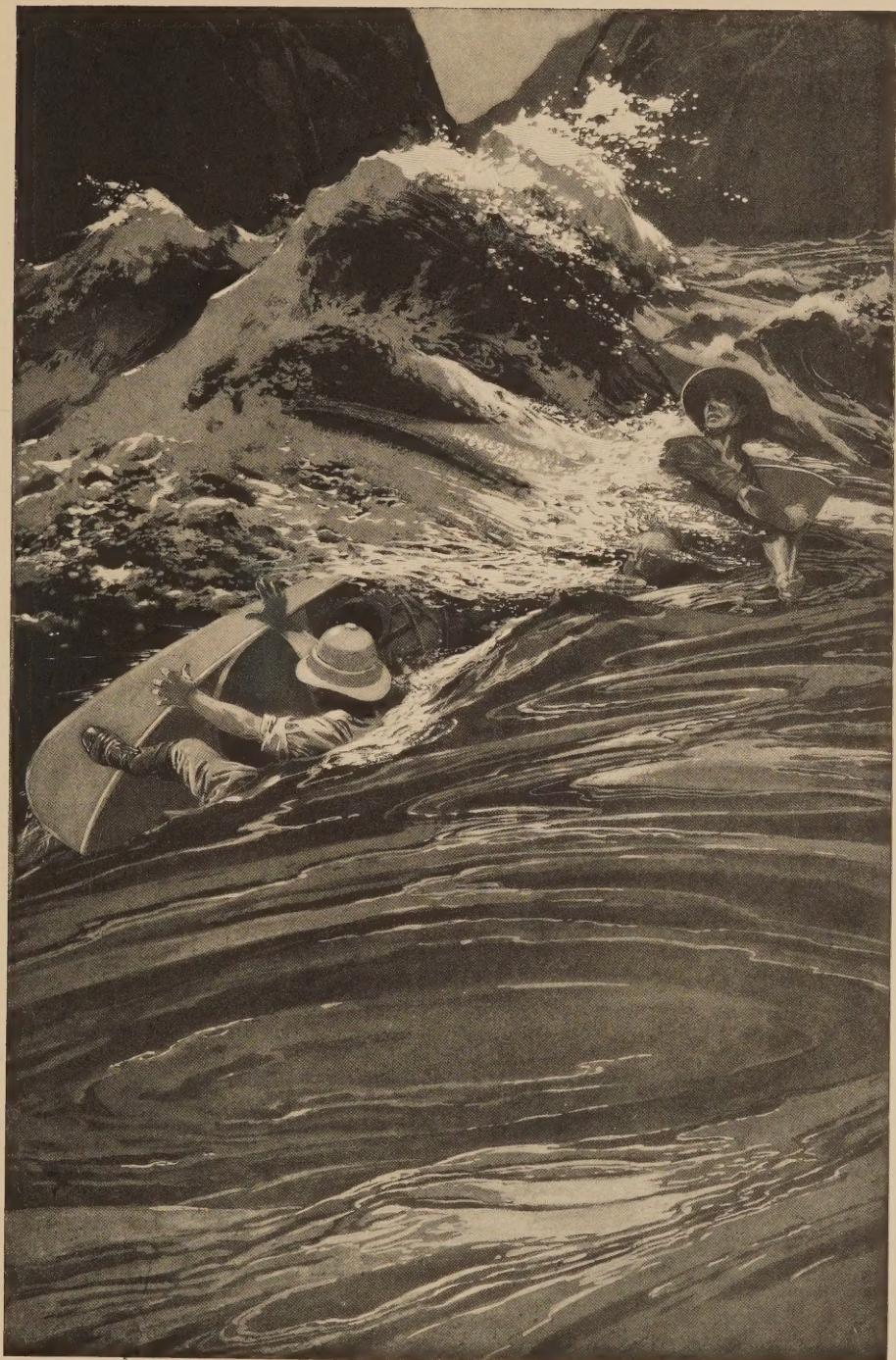
On the following morning I resumed my canoe journey to New Dongola, now only one hundred and seventy miles distant, and for two days made but little progress in the face of a strong head wind, which culminated in a terrific sand-storm. This was succeeded by a clear, calm day, but with scorching heat. Nevertheless, when I ran ashore that night near Urbi, one of the scores of villages which line the river-banks throughout the Merawi-Dongola reach, it was after a day's run of over seventy miles, with only twenty more between me and my destination. At the water's edge I was met by a dignified old

native, his face almost hidden by enormous turban and long beard, who presently made me understand that he was the omdah of Urbi, and wished me to accept his hospitality. As I declined to go to the village, but expressed my willingness to camp on the bank, he at once sent off messengers, who returned shortly with an angareb, fuel, milk, and dates. Having seen the preparations for my comfort well under way, he retired, to return at daylight bearing a great bowl of milk, and wishing me God-speed on my voyage.

Throughout my journey in the Sudan every white man was my friend, and I was continually the recipient of kindnesses from all to whom I bore letters or messages from resident British officers; while at the hands of many native sheiks and omdahs, to whom I came an utter stranger, I experienced spontaneous, unobtrusive Arab hospitality.

At noon on the 6th of August I reached New Dongola, where I had the pleasure of again meeting the mudir, D—— Bey, who brought me to the "palace," an exceedingly pretty brick building half hidden in a grove of noble palms. Dongola is not, however, an ideal place of residence; there is rarely a suggestion of a breeze, swarms of gnats abound, and only the night before the governor's library had barely escaped destruction by white ants. Here, as arranged with the mudir of Berber, I started Suleiman homeward, a roundabout journey via Halfa. Henceforth Suleiman will be the much traveled man of his native village. All the officers at the post took a lively interest in my expedition, and Bimbashi H——, who was about starting on a tour of inspection through the northern part of the province, to my great gratification arranged to join me at Kosheh for a week's canoeing.

The duties of the British official on these circuits of inspection are both arduous and onerous. His is the position of the "just kadi," to whose court the natives flock with their supplications and grievances; and the patient care with which their petitions are investigated, and the absolute justice of the decisions rendered, are a revelation to the Sudanese, accustomed for centuries to the all-powerful influence of bakshish. Several sessions of one of these simple courts attended by me were full of interest. The British, ever pioneers in sup-



Drawn by Fernand Lungren. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

**WRECKED IN THE RAPIDS**

pressing the slave-trade, had that great problem to face on their reoccupation of the Sudan—in this instance the more difficult as it was the chief industry of the country. Already the traffic has been broken up, but no attempt has been made toward general emancipation. Any slave, by showing cause before the court, can, however, obtain his freedom, an attempt rarely made because cruelty of master toward slave seldom occurs in Mohammedan countries.

Most of the cases concern title to property. The Arab loves litigation, and contentedly squanders his time and wealth over a rod of land or half a date-tree. Some of these trivial affairs were so involved that their solution by ordinary procedure was impossible; they were generally referred to a board of arbitration consisting of native omdahs. If this was under British supervision, the result was cheerfully accepted.

Aside from the Third Cataract, and the Kaibar and Amara rapids, nothing breaks the open water between Dongola and Kosheh, one hundred and sixty-five miles below. Of these only the first offered any difficulty, and, with a government reis in the bow of my canoe, I was able to pick my way through its five miles of rock-strewn rapids. As I proceeded, the country became more barren, and villages, durra-fields, and palm-groves grew more infrequent, until I entered upon a mountainous waste rivaling the country of the Fourth Cataract in desolation.

Here, not a quarter of a mile from the river, arose the ruins of the temple of Soleb, a picture of dazzling whiteness in a framing of yellow sand. A dozen mighty columns remained standing, their varied capitals uninjured, while the plan of the structure was indicated by the ruined bases of the others. On columns and walls were reliefs and hieroglyphics, among which could be frequently distinguished the cartouche of Amenophis III. The temple is a beautiful example of the architecture of the Eighteenth Dynasty, its impressiveness increased by the solitude.

At Kosheh, a village near the battle-field of Firket, and the last of the government posts in the province of Dongola, I found H—— awaiting me, and the following day we loaded the canoe with our kits and began the descent of the Second Cataract. Shooting the formidable Dal rapid in safety that same afternoon, we were borne into the

grim rocky portal at its foot, fit entrance to the appalling Batyn-el-Hagar (Belly of Rocks), that seeming remnant of primeval chaos through which the Nile rends its tortuous course in a succession of cataracts extending one hundred and fifteen miles to Halfa below.

For a day all went well. The Akasha, Tanjour, and Ambukol rapids were passed successfully, though not without shipping quantities of water into our heavily laden boat, and the next afternoon found us descending through a gorge the lofty sides of which cut off our sunlight. Here our government maps became useless, the river being indicated by indefinite dotted lines; and so, carried by the swift current, we came entirely without warning upon the cataract of Semneh. The frowning walls closed in upon us, rounding a sharp curve, we came suddenly upon the brink of the fall, where a jagged crag divided the river into two narrow channels.

Into the right-hand one at a venture we headed, and I suppose it all happened in a few seconds, although at the time it seemed deliberate enough. The canoe safely shot the first fall and apparently breasted the breakers beyond, only to be caught by a whirlpool which inexorably drew it backward again into the foot of the fall. On the instant that we were once more in the full power of the cataract, our boat was caught up, spun about like an egg-shell, and hurled into the wall of waters beyond. A huge wave struck me in the face and chest, the canoe seemed to melt away beneath me, and I was struggling in the water. As I came to the surface the water-filled canoe, with H—— clinging to one end, appeared a short distance to my right. By good fortune I managed to reach it, and, half submerged in the swirling torrent, the canoe and its recent passengers tore wildly down the river.

Minutes and miles passed, and the dusk deepened. In vain we endeavored to divert the boat from its course and tow it toward the shore; and in one of these attempts the painter was wrenched from H——'s grasp, and as I was whirled around a jutting rock I caught a final glimpse of a khaki helmet on the crest of a distant wave. It was probably a couple of miles below when, still clinging to the boat in spite of waves and rapids, I was drawn over another fall and sucked into a whirlpool beyond. The

sensation of sailing under water, even for a short distance, is distinctly unpleasant; but almost instantly I was shot to the surface out of the eddy's reach, and, by great good luck, in the direction of the shore. Throughout I had maintained my hold upon my paddle, and now, catching the painter in my teeth, I swam my best toward the rocks, on which I gained foothold before the slack rope was exhausted, and thus reached a spit of sand, dragging the boat after me.

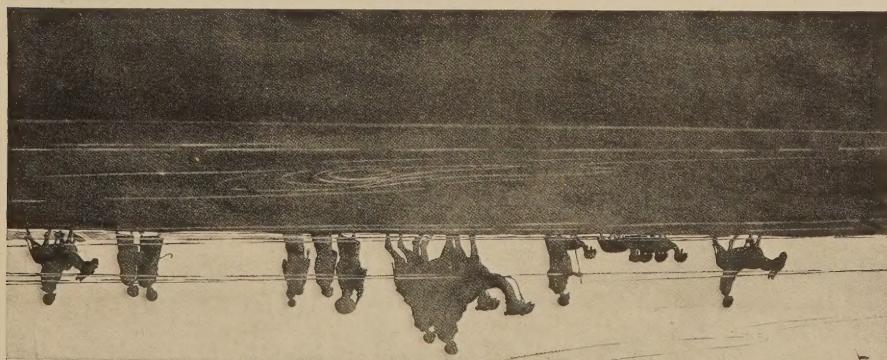
I immediately made the best of my way up-stream, alternately shouting and listening. After half a mile or so I was rejoiced beyond measure to hear H——'s distant answering hail, and presently our meeting was ratified by a simple Anglo-Saxon handshake; whereupon we sat down and proceeded to extract the mimosa thorns from our bare feet. Regaining the canoe, we discovered that the false floor, which had been screwed to the ribs of the boat and to which our belongings were firmly lashed, together with the added thwarts, had been torn away bodily, and not a vestige of our equipment remained. Aside from this, however, the stanch little craft was apparently intact. At this moment I thought I saw, describing large circles around the whirlpool, an object resembling the waterproof bag which contained certain smaller items of my kit. Venturing out in the canoe the next time it appeared, I managed to secure it to the painter, and so towed it to land; but the rest of our outfit doubtless lay at the bottom of the Nile.

Our camp on the sand that night, without blankets, food, or fire, was a sorry affair; and at length, in desperation, H—— set out

in the darkness in search of human habitation—a forlorn hope. About midnight he returned, footsore and weary, followed by three natives whom he had chanced to discover at a squalid hut some miles down the river. We welcomed the use of their sheepskins and the warmth of the fire which they kindled with flint and steel; but their commissariat was nearly as lean as our own, all the food they were able to furnish us being a handful of dates and a bit of durra bread.

The next morning, there being no other course open, we again embarked in the canoe, now certainly light enough, for the remaining stretch of thirty-five miles to Halfa and civilization. By noon we had reached the head of the great Abkeh, where the reis of the cataract, according to previous appointment, was awaiting us with two companions, all furnished with swimming-skins. Under their pilotage we safely traversed the nine miles of rapids, winding in and out among the hundreds of islands with which the broad torrent is studded, and keeping well to the right shore, until the rock of Abusir, which guards the last chute (the Bab-el-Kebir), arose to our left, and we entered smooth water once more.

Late that afternoon, thirty days from Khartum, the canoe reached Wady Halfa, where we received the warmest of welcomes from our friends, the officers stationed there. Four days later, at Assuan, two hundred and twenty-five miles below, where H—— was obliged to leave me and return, I reluctantly parted from that most delightful of friends. Resuming the voyage to Cairo, I reached my destination one month later.



A REFLECTION



Drawn by Sigismund Ivanowski. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

THE POPPY-WITCH